John Holmes McDowell

Coaxing the Corrido: Centering Song in Performance

Drawing on ballad performances on Mexico's Costa Chica, I seek to isolate and identify a niche in the performance sequence that I refer to as "coaxing the corrido," an interlude during which ballad performers indulge in muted renderings of the next song to assure their control over its words and music. I argue that comparable episodes are most likely present in many or most of the world's performance traditions and that attending closely to them holds the promise of insights into the management of musical performance, the dynamics of artistic collaboration, and native modes of experiencing these art forms.

> The culture of a people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the anthropologist strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong.
>
> —Clifford Geertz

I intend this article as a contribution to the study of performance, even if I will have little or nothing to say about performance. Instead, I hope to illuminate a moment in the organizing of performance that is so ephemeral as to be scarcely palpable, a moment I shall refer to as "coaxing." I will address this theme with recourse to field data I have assembled during the last thirty years in my quest to understand the Mexican corrido, a distinctive genre of heroic song; however, I believe that what I am calling "coaxing" is not restricted to this genre and, in fact, may be rather widespread in the performing arts, especially in settings where a polished, seamless act is not a priority. I approach coaxing as a communicative frame, in the sense of a discourse segment marked for processing according to a distinctive set of interpretive rules (Bateson 1972; Bauman 1977). The coaxing frame can be thought of as a venue of pure "contextualization" (Gumperz 1982), as an instance of what Erving Goffman (1981) terms "subordinate communication," and also as a species of "intertextuality" (Bauman 2004). Coaxing implicates these (and other) conceptual domains but tweaks them to arrive at its own peculiar purpose—the anticipation of performance.

The present inquiry, despite its seemingly narrow focus, seeks to draw attention to a widespread phenomenon and in the process shed light on a number of broader issues tied to the study of performance. It ventures into the *accomplishment* of musical performance, viewing it as a socially constructed practice wherein skills are exer-

John Holmes McDowell is Professor of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Indiana University

Journal of American Folklore 123(488):127–149

cised to achieve remarkable results. Singing a corrido entails mustering these skills and applying them to the task at hand and, frequently, coordinating the efforts of coperformers. It also entails coordinating the horizons of performers and audiences, and this article is a contribution to the study of "the organization of attention between audience and performer" (Berger and Del Negro 2002:76; see also Berger and Del Negro 2004), but with a peculiar twist: the goal of coaxing is to approach the contours of the song-in-waiting without attracting the attention of the audience. The real focus here is on organizing the attention of the performers, fixing it on the vocal and instrumental features of the song they are about to perform.

Music performance events, much like conversations, depend on a web of largely invisible and frequently unacknowledged coordinating maneuvers for their successful execution, and I attempt in this article to highlight some of these infrastructural elements (Schutz 1964; Stone 1982; Monson 1996; Berger 1999). Coaxing, when practiced by a lone performer, has the feel of a soliloquy, but when practiced between two or among three or more musicians, it becomes a conversation and progresses, as we shall see, through sequences of turns and moves of the sort identified in conversation analysis (see Tannen 1989). These jointly sustained coaxing interludes can be appreciated as arenas of social process, where participants juggle statuses and strategies to negotiate a viable consensus on the next performance item. Indeed, coming to consensus through coaxing is a harbinger of the coordinated actions that will mark their shared artistic efforts once the performance begins.

But there is more to coaxing than its contributions to the accomplishment of performance. If coaxing is a form of communication, it is equally a form of metacommunication (Bateson 1972), where words are used to evoke words and music is used to evoke music. Coaxing implicates the reflexive capabilities of artistic performance by foregrounding a specific variety of native exegesis, one in which the commentary is unsolicited and largely unselfconscious. Students of ethnography have correctly pointed to the disturbance created by the ethnographer's interventions (Paredes 1977; Briggs 1986); in contrast, we encounter in coaxing a naturally occurring instance of native exegesis, as participants in the culture search for handles on cultural domains and share these with one another in an effort to coarticulate their horizons of focused consciousness. As a consequence, I contend, coaxing offers unadulterated access to how singers and musicians in this setting conceptualize and experience the poetic and musical dimensions of their craft. Consequential matters such as a melody's salient features, a ballad text's most striking lines, or the location of a song protagonist in a larger social network are revealed to us without our having to formulate and pose our "obtuse questions" (Geertz 1973:29).

Consequently, coaxing episodes deliver a schema of form and content that captures, in skeletal form, the performers' unselfconscious grasp on the material. We can think of these episodes as fertile sites of "contextualization," defined by Bauman and Briggs as "an active process of negotiation in which participants reflexively examine the discourse as it is emerging, embedding assessments of its structure and significance into the speech itself" (1990:69). In coaxing the corrido, verbal, musical, and even kinetic gestures can serve as the "contextualization cues" (Gumperz 1982:131) that

"signal which features of the setting are used by interactants in producing interpretive frameworks" (Bauman and Briggs 1990:68).

Richard Bauman and Pamela Ritch (1994) have produced a careful discussion of the activities preceding performances, with reference to religious folk dramas known as *coloquios*, in Tierra Blanca, Guanajuato State, Mexico. They argue that the "privileging of fully performed texts and/or bounded performance events as our analytical frames of reference has largely precluded *systematic* attention to other significant dimensions of performance as a mode of social action" and call for attending to "the production processes by which performances are made" (1994:256). Titling their article "Informing Performance" (by which they mean "giving form to" performance), Bauman and Ritch take stock of a series of events within the larger performance event, with special attention to the cycle of rehearsals leading to the full performance itself. This scholarly program yields ample insights into the making of performance, but there is no frame within the pre-performance cycle of activities in Tierra Blanca coloquios that coincides precisely with the coaxing I witnessed in corrido performances several hundred miles to the south on Mexico's Costa Chica.

I define the *coaxing frame* as a phantom, muted, or virtual performance, subdued and curtailed in nature, occurring at the immediate threshold of full-blown performances, where it serves as a critical aid to performers as they prepare to release a song or other expressive form to an audience.[1] It has something of the character of a rehearsal, but it lacks the insularity of most rehearsals, which are clearly separated in time and space from performances and carried out in the absence of primary audiences (though rehearsals may, of course, have their own audiences). Likewise, coaxing is something like prompting (also addressed in Bauman and Ritch 1994), in which lines are quietly provided to actors, but in coaxing episodes there is no onstage-offstage conduit and the movement into performance is decisive and irreversible. Further, there are similarities between coaxing and the talk used by performers at bluegrass festivals to introduce their songs (see Bealle 1993), but coaxing is different in that it is not restricted to verbal gestures and does not include the audience as an interlocutor. What Richard Schechner (1985:19–20) calls "warm ups" comes close to the mark, but it seems to me that coaxing is a distinctive communicative act, similar to others but identical to none and worthy of patient inspection.

The coaxing frame can be assimilated to what Erving Goffman terms "subordinate communication." In deconstructing speaker and hearer roles, Goffman identifies subordinate communication as "talk that is manned, timed, and pitched to constitute a perceivedly limited interference to what might be called the 'dominating communication' in its vicinity" (1981:133). Clearly, he has in mind simultaneous exchanges within a single conversational setting, and he goes on to take note of "byplay," "crossplay," and "sideplay" as three varieties, based on the interaction between the "main" exchange and its rivals. Goffman proposes the concepts of "participation status" to describe the role of an individual in these complex talk settings and "participation framework" to describe the alignment of exchanges during "that moment of speech" (1981:137).

This template is useful in fashioning an approach to coaxing the corrido, provided we view the "dominant" and "subordinate" exchanges as sequential rather than

simultaneous. We can view coaxing as a form of subordinate communication that precedes the dominant communication, the singing of the song. In this light, it makes sense to label coaxing episodes as "preplay," which we can add to Goffman's list of talk alignments in these settings with multiple exchanges. We can also reference Goffman's idea of "collusion," which he reserves for occasions "when an attempt *is* made to conceal subordinate communication" (1981:134; emphasis in original). Musicians engaged in coaxing on the Costa Chica do make at least a symbolic effort to conceal what they are doing, typically by turning away from the audience and dampening their actions or by masking their coaxing with the tuning of instruments. Therefore, it makes sense to recognize in coaxing a zone of subordinate communication with a participation framework we could characterize as collusive preplay.

Another fruitful perspective on coaxing derives from the concept of intertextuality, defined by Richard Bauman as "the relational orientation of texts to other texts" (2004:4). The forms of expression that emerge in coaxing and in full performance can be seen as texts that bear a tight relational orientation to one another. Bauman anticipates this linkage when he enumerates a set of intertextual possibilities: "a performed text may be subsequently—or, to be sure, antecedently—reported, rehearsed, translated, relayed, quoted, summarized, or parodied" (2004:10). Coaxing, as I already have suggested, is a kind of attenuated rehearsing, though carried out "on stage" and with the audience present. One crucial feature of intertextuality is the degree of fidelity among different iterations of a text; Briggs and Bauman (1992) use the term "intertextual gap" to describe these differences, and Bauman calls for scholars to measure or calibrate that gap with respect to its "restriction or amplification" (2004:7)—that is, the extent to which a derived text deviates from its prototype.

As a communicative frame, coaxing anticipates performance by realizing its prominent outlines, but necessarily in a reduced, partial, and muted form; otherwise, the coaxing would threaten to break through into performance (Hymes 1981), thereby throwing the framing (and the audience) into confusion. The intertextual gap—the diminishment of the text in coaxing, its full representation in performance—is essential to signal and maintain the preliminary and derivative status of coaxing. Yet it is equally important that the features of the coaxing text correlate rather closely to those of the performance text; otherwise, the coaxing may be said to have been flawed. We might think of coaxing as a form of anticipatory intertextuality, modeled on the performance text but defined by its halting, schematic presentation and marked by what we have called collusive preplay, a framing that excludes the audience by convention rather than by physical or temporal separation.

These characterizations are helpful as far as they go, but they miss the main purpose of coaxing in the first place, which is to facilitate the entrance of a new song into the performance arena. For that reason, it has been necessary to stipulate the anteriority of coaxing through qualifiers such as "pre" and "anticipatory." When musicians on Mexico's Costa Chica prepare to sing a corrido through a coaxing episode, they are not deliberately reducing a complete artifact to a partial one. What they are doing is calling to mind a song that is known to them by trying out any of its accessible attributes. Their reduced product is actually a best effort to produce an initial formulation of the song they are seeking.

Costa Chica Corridos

The corrido is known to folklorists and ethnomusicologists largely through the work of Américo Paredes on the ballads of his beloved borderlands in South Texas and North Mexico (Paredes 1963, 1993), though the genre has enjoyed renewed attention in more recent years as a folk chronicle of Mexican and Mexican American history in the throes of immigration, drug trafficking across the border, and participation in the so-called War on Terror (Herrera-Sobek 1990; Heisley 1993; Hernández 1992; Nicolopolous 1997; Wald 2001; McDowell 2007). Heir to the Spanish *romance*, yet influenced by indigenous narrative traditions, the corrido offers an account of local and regional history, pegged to the perspective of *el pueblo* (the common people).[2] During the early decades of the twentieth century, with border conflict in South Texas and revolution throughout Mexico, the genre flourished in virtually every corner of the Mexican nation, and many thousands of corridos were composed and disseminated through oral performance, broadside ballad sheets, and publication in national and regional newspapers (Paredes 1958; Mendoza 1954).

With these great conflagrations burning out by the late 1920s, corridos became less of a national passion and more rooted in the quarrels and tribulations of specific corrido regions, prominently the northern borderlands and interior pockets such as the Costa Chica, an Afromestizo coastal zone in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca. It is this regional tradition that has occupied my attention since I first visited it in 1972, at the suggestion of my teacher, Américo Paredes. I have continued working with this tradition over the years, producing a series of articles and the 2000 monograph *Poetry and Violence: The Ballad Tradition of Mexico's Costa Chica*. Here, I draw on data gathered on the Costa Chica to elucidate the coaxing frame in corrido performance.

Corrido performance features a structural anatomy that repeats with some consistency from setting to setting, especially outside of the more formal of performance venues. In casual singing sessions, as performers move from one ballad to another and navigate the space between casual conversation, legend recitation, and song, they commonly "try out" or anticipate schematically the forthcoming song in an effort to secure their grasp on its lyrics and melody. Songs within the corrido tradition resemble one another to a considerable extent, and performers must exert themselves in calling to mind the particular nuances of text and tune that set one piece apart from another. Corrido lyrics are crafted, to a significant extent, from a pool of convenient formulas; yet unlike the performances of epics analyzed by Milman Parry and Albert Lord (1960), the stanzas of traditional corridos are expected to remain largely intact from one singing and singer to the next (McDowell 1972). Corrido melodies also present their problems, as they fall into a small set of familiar tune families, and one melody may be differentiated from another by relatively small details. These features of lyric and tune pose serious challenges as musicians attempt to shift from one corrido to another.

Performers on the Costa Chica have spoken to me about the difficulty of making these transitions; one of the stars of corrido singing from that region, Juvencio Vargas, would say to himself, as he prepared to sing a corrido, "*Debo centrarme*" (I need to

center myself), in reference to locating the next song in casual performance settings. This was about as close as any singer came to recognizing the work of coaxing; for them, as for their audiences, the song is the thing. There is a formality of procedure, even in relatively informal settings, that allows performers and audiences to factor out coaxing episodes as if, for all practical purposes, they did not exist. When the matter is directly posed to them, people will assent that on occasion, musicians will take a moment or two to organize themselves between songs, but the tendency among performers and audiences alike is to treat these interludes as inconsequential—a stance that, I daresay, scholars have assumed as well. I propose in this article to reverse this tendency and violate local etiquette by closely regarding and treating as consequential the moves that musicians make as they approximate the next song in a sequence of songs. I think of the method employed here as a form of benevolent eavesdropping, akin to what Clifford Geertz terms reading "over the shoulders" to attain a sense of how people view their own practices (1972:29).

One searches in vain in the considerable body of corrido scholarship to find a mention of this muted performance frame preceding the "official" performance, the one that counts and is of record. The best precursor that I am aware of is Américo Paredes's suggestive discussion of the interplay of ballad and legend, where he notes that the two genres can complement one another in a performance setting or can appear sequentially as a ballad decays and only its companion legends remain (Paredes 1958, 1973). The kind of legend material to which Paredes attends is quite similar to the content of the prologues and epilogues to corrido performance that I observed on the Costa Chica, which I will discuss below.

Even among my own field materials, I had to rustle around a bit for good traces of this expendable juncture in the drift toward performance, a juncture that is easily dismissed as simply "warming up" and hence excised from the record.[3] But I believe that the areas of insight I have delineated here—the accomplishment of musical performance, the special forms of reflexivity proffered by unsolicited native exegesis, and the interpersonal dynamics of collaborative effort—justify us in taking seriously what is treated as ephemera in the ballad community. On inspection, coaxing can be seen as integral to the elaboration of finished performance and hence belongs in any thorough account of such performance.

On the Costa Chica, corridos are sung in a number of differing venues, each with its own peculiar qualities of formality and informality, and thus with varying tolerances for coaxing. The most formal settings are concerts arranged for local elites and tourists, though corridos rarely make an appearance in these settings, which are more likely to feature the romantic component of the regional repertoire. As corridos deal with endemic social ills, it is not surprising they are rarely featured in elite locales like Acapulco's convention center, the Centro Internacional Acapulco, where national and international tourists gather to appreciate music and dance performances. Still, as emblems of local culture, corridos will occasionally be included in these presentations. When they are, though, the options for coaxing are extremely limited; formal concert venues are, after all, places to exhibit seamless artistic performances.

The great majority of corrido performance on the Costa Chica occurs in less formal venues—in cantina performances among cohorts of males; at social events called *bo-*

hemias, where people come together to share poetry and song as they indulge in the ample food and drink provided by their hosts; and in private homes when family and friends gather for brief or prolonged bouts of socializing. These less formal settings are more open to coaxing, as the premium in these settings is not on "an effortless flow of sound" (Berger and Del Negro 2002:74) but rather on the pleasant exchange of artful vernacular performance (Abrahams 2005). Granted, in every one of these performance events musicians are expected to show competence. Once a singer launches into singing a corrido, he or she comes under an obligation to produce a viable rendition (meaning that the performance should be both accurate, in the sense of cleaving somewhat closely to the song's or the tradition's familiar features, and complete). There is, in these settings, some latitude for idiosyncrasy, but it would be anathema to noticeably mangle the song's stanzas, leave out whole sections of a song, or leave a song unfinished. Corrido singers, like all performers, take on a responsibility to their audiences for the way they accomplish their task (Bauman 1977).

In fact, it is precisely this conjunction of responsibility to the audience, on the one hand, and informality of performance venue, on the other, that creates conditions favorable to the emergence of coaxing. The requirement to satisfy the audience's expectations mandates the production of an acceptable version of the song, while the relaxed circumstances of the social gathering open a space for coaxing, to insure, just ahead of the onset of accountability, that the performers will be up to the task. By reserving for themselves a space that is consensually treated as if it were "off-stage," the musicians acquire a precious opportunity to verify their hold on the upcoming song. In this way, when accountability clicks in—that is, when the move from coaxing to performing is signaled—the resulting product will indeed conform to the expected standards.

I have witnessed coaxing elements in a range of performance settings, though the frame is most fully developed, as one would suppose, when performers come together informally before audiences whose members are family, friends, and associates. Consider the session that emerged during a March afternoon in 1990, at the home of Juvencio Vargas in Acapulco, when old friend and fellow musician Enrique Mares stopped by, guitar in hand, to pay a visit. As the occasion was serendipitous, neither man had worked up an agenda; further, the pair lacked the opportunity to practice and work out all the snags. To be sure, each of them had a store of corridos: Enrique had even listed on a small piece of paper the names of some ten corridos (each identified by the hero's name). But one corrido tune easily blends into another, and the words of one corrido must be disentangled from the words of another. In short, the corrido must be coaxed from the periphery to the center of consciousness.

To accomplish this, between songs the two men switched into a kind of muted performance, trying out a new melody in half-voice, picking out a few chords, selecting a rhythmic pulse. Often a conference took place: "*Ese es en menor*" (That's in minor key), "*Es pasodoble, ¿verdad?*" (It's a pasodoble, right?). I observed that the theme of the song may be fixed in mind by naming the principal hero (usually the guy who gets killed) or by rehearsing the lineage of the hero: "*Ese del primo de ese señor de Coyaca*" (The one about the cousin of that man from Coyaca). These various aids were brought into play as Enrique and Juvencio coaxed their corridos, and I could perceive the abstract corrido taking on a corporeal form. As the singers came

closer and closer to a feeling of certainty, the energy level would rise and sketchy impressions turned less hesitant. At last, the threshold between coaxing and performance was traversed, often verbally by the expression—always delivered in a crisp, definitive tone—"*¡Sale!*" (Here goes!).

All the while, the posture and body orientation adopted by Enrique and Juvencio provided additional cues. In the coaxing phase, the two men slouched toward each other, effectively shutting out the audience, which consisted of me, my wife Pat, and a small crowd that had gathered at the doorway. The move to performance was marked by a reorientation toward the audience and a stiffening of posture. Now voice and guitar were sounded at full volume, and there was no turning back.

The chance convergence of musician friends, the informal character of the venue, the casual mood of the audience—these elements are conducive to the fullest realization of the coaxing frame. But as I have suggested, I do not think that coaxing is confined to these kinds of situations, nor would I say that it is confined to singing corridos on the Costa Chica. If we accept the notion that coaxing can occur in both sustained and attenuated forms, I believe we can begin to identify its traces in much or most of the world's live music performance. At its most attenuated, shall we say in a concert performance where audience members have paid generously to hear acclaimed practitioners of their craft, coaxing may be limited to the most subtle of gestures at the threshold of performance—the briefest of eye contact, the slightest hint of the forthcoming piece's texture, a barely perceived nod. In settings of this ilk, there is an expectation of effortless artistic coordination, and signs of preparatory work are excised from public notice.

But even concert venues can allot a space to coaxing: think of the symphonic orchestra in the moments before the conductor emerges from the wings, of rock musicians in the set-up phase between bands, or of jazz musicians turning inward upon themselves to fix a rhythm or key in advance of performing. Each of these evinces intertextual foreshadowing, and each is perceptible but conventionally disregarded by audiences. It seems to me that coaxing, understood in this fluid way, is omnipresent in musical performance, with the provisos that differing venues have differing levels of tolerance for its turns and gestures, and that coaxing episodes may be highly attenuated, richly evolved, or somewhere in between, depending on the circumstances.

With Costa Chica corrido performance, we have a performance genre that occurs primarily in venues that are receptive to coaxing episodes. Let's turn our attention to the ways coaxing operates in these venues, in an effort to assess what coaxing might be able to tell us about musical collaboration, naturally occurring native exegesis, and the reflexive possibilities inherent in artistic performance. In order to appreciate the coaxing frame, I will first need to situate it in the full context of metaperformance discourse in Costa Chica music—that is to say, the complete set of expressions that accompany song performance there but are not, in a narrow sense, an integral part of it. Loosely speaking, I am concerned here with precisely those elements that are not likely to be included in the transcriptions of song lyrics or in musical scores. In a previous essay (McDowell 1992), I focused on the conversational components of this metaperformance discourse in order to zero in on aspects of style and content

distinctive to the performed text, what I termed "the commemorative utterance." Here, I turn to the full spectrum of discourse surrounding the performance with a different goal—to isolate the peculiar character and purpose of the frame I call coaxing the corrido.

The Corrido Performance Sequence

Richard Schechner argues for attending to "the whole performance sequence" (1985:16), and that is precisely what I propose to do as a means of focusing more sharply the coaxing frame. When corridos are performed in public settings, they serve as a focal point, a deep nexus of meaning and inspiration. It is the special role of such commemorative discourse to shape collective memory through the vehicle of measured and allusive language (McDowell 1992). But the informative discourse that surrounds these performances plays a crucial and complementary role, and surprisingly, it has just as much to teach us about the people who create these commemorative artifacts.

Contrary to what Bauman and Ritch (1994) found in Tierra Blanca, there is no common vocabulary to label activities surrounding the singing of corridos on the Costa Chica. The coaxing frame, too, goes unnamed and largely unrecognized in the ballad community, as I have noted. But these metaperformance frames are nonetheless very real, and people in the ballad community relish the interplay of song and commentary in settings where corridos are performed.

Analytically, we can isolate the following set of discursive elements:

(1) *Annunciation*. The imminence of an initial song or a sequel is signaled by some verbal or musical gesture; this could take the form of an explicit announcement, or it could be conveyed by naming the hero or strumming a chord progression on the guitar. The annunciation can be a signal passed between or among musicians, with the audience excluded or bypassed (in which case it counts as coaxing), or it may take the form of a forthright statement addressed directly to the audience. In my field materials, I have instances of formal announcements based on conventions associated with broadcast and concert performances, and announcements couched as dedications to members of the audience.

(2) *Prologue*. The new song is discussed, and contextual cues such as the location or timing of the narrated events are provided; often, some personal association with the song, the theme, or the location is mentioned. The prologue is overtly pitched to the audience and may involve members of the audience as interlocutors with the musicians, though it may take the form of a conversation among the musicians. As with the epilogue (see below), this phase often conveys crucial information about the song, the narrated events, and the musicians' relationship to both song and events; unlike in coaxing, however, the audience is accorded a participant status.

(3) *Coaxing*. Positioned at the threshold of the performance, this component features a muted rehearsing of essential musical, verbal, and contextual ideas. The distinctive feature of this phase is its insularity: even though presented in a performance arena, it is marked as nonperformance and, more than that, as communication not intended for the audience's notice. This marking takes the form of a turning inward, as performers create a private space for exchanging information not directed to the audience. Coaxing is terminated with a reorientation to the audience and an expression

of resolve, such as "*Allí está*" (there it is), "*Ya está*" (it's ready), or "*¡Sale!*" (Here goes!).

(4) *The performance*. Here, we witness what most researchers have sought after, the singing of the song, most often to the exclusion of the companion discourse segments treated in this article. Corrido performances are not immune to metaperformance incursions, as audience members contribute their boisterous yet artful *gritos* (shouts) and singers occasionally banter with the audience during instrumental interludes (see McDowell 1992).

(5) *Audience reaction*. As the corrido performance comes to a close, audience members often take advantage of the transition to contribute gritos and verbalized appreciations along the lines of "*¡Así es Guerrero, puro gallo!*" (That's Guerrero, all fighting cocks!) or "*¡Viva la Costa Chica!*" (Hurray for the Costa Chica!). This is the audience's moment to ventilate, as the gritos and exclamations cluster to delineate the termination of the song performance.

(6) *Epilogue*. As in the prologue, commentary is added, often by performers and audience members alike, to supplement the song just performed. Frequently, the epilogue is the site of evaluative commentary, along the lines of "*¡Está fuerte ese corrido, está bonito!*" (That's a strong corrrido, it's fine!) or "*¡Ese corrido tiene espinas!*" (That corrido has thorns!). But performers, sometimes in collaboration with audience members, may launch into a more extensive discussion to clarify some feature of the corrido or add relevant information.

(7) *Closure*. Finally, a pronouncement may be made by a performer or audience member to signal the end of the sequence, typically in the form of declarations like "*¡Se acabó!*" (It's over!) or "*¡Ya estuvo!*" (That was it!), or occasionally in the form of a proverbial expression or other summarizing statement meant to capture the ballad's meaning, as in an expression I heard more than once at this juncture, "*Lo que se debe se paga*" (What is owed must be paid).

The performance itself is usually a discrete, bounded event, but the frames preceding and following performance are not so neatly packaged and may overlap with their neighbors in the sequence. Prologues and epilogues are rich fountains of information, and they may open a field for performance in other traditional genres, especially legend and memorate. As noted above, Américo Paredes wrote about the interplay between the poetic narrative of the ballads and prose narrative of the commentary around them, and this symbiosis is evident on the Costa Chica as well (McDowell 2005). The audience-reaction frame gives scope to the release of significant energies as people bellow, holler, and shout out their approval of song and singer, and declare their identification with place.

The Coaxing Frame

The basic problem to be solved through coaxing is that of isolating clearly the distinctive musical and lyrical properties of the forthcoming song. Coaxing techniques include humming tune fragments and singing, in undertone, lines or stanzas of the song text; strumming the guitar or sounding other instruments to work out rhythms, keys, chord progressions, and melodies; and articulating verbal descriptors to identify actions, places, and protagonists in the narrated event. The coaxing frame is often

a discrete segment in the pre-performance sequence, but it can also occur in tandem with other phases; the entire pre-performance set can occur more as a collage than as a series. Thus, the first strains announcing the new song may be sounded on the guitar, even as the epilogue of the previous song is coming to an end. The coaxing may be sustained in interstices within the prologue to the song-in-waiting. But this fluidity in timing does not undermine the analytical validity of each component, as is evident when the full sequence is present and sharply delineated.

The most typical expression of coaxing a corrido is the humming of the first line or two of the song's melody, moving to a soft articulation of text as the words become available, often with a schematic guitar accompaniment. There is, in coaxing corridos, a good deal of inarticulate humming, as well as a mouthing of words in *sotto voce*, which I will refer to as "soft-singing" in the analysis that follows. At a minimum, coaxing on the Costa Chica entails a single passage of the fingers or pick over the strings of the guitar to proclaim the tonic chord (the one that is at the song's tonal center); more elaborate is the establishment of the key using a muted tonic-dominant-tonic cadence (a series of chords that mark the end of a passage). At the other extreme, the coaxing may become so prolonged that it resembles a full-scale rehearsal or practice session; in such cases, the coaxing may actually overwhelm the performance, and the effect is that of attending a corrido workshop rather than a performance session.

Let's take a closer look at three coaxing episodes that I have extracted from corrido performances on Mexico's Costa Chica, involving three different pairs of musicians observed on three different occasions. The first two are rather perfunctory and illustrate coaxing through musical means. Episode 1 is coaxing at its most basic, as the musicians work through nine coaxing turns, partially masking their coaxing by embedding it in a tuning of guitars. Episode 2 shows coaxing sandwiched neatly between the prologue and the performance. Episode 3 is one of the most involved in my materials; the musicians make use of both musical and verbal means and indulge in a sustained conversation that features competition in selecting the next song. These selected coaxing episodes offer a fair idea of how coaxing proceeds in my sample of Costa Chica corrido performances. Coaxing happens across a range of performance venues, and it is present, on the Costa Chica, in both solo performances and in ensemble playing. But it seems to flourish when two singers get together to perform corridos. Each episode presented here involves two musicians combining efforts to secure the next song. These episodes are instructive with regard to patterns of social interaction among musicians, the kinds of resources called upon in coaxing the corrido, and the cognitive schema these resources reveal. We witness in each case a progression in the coaxing gestures that results, at last, in the evocation of the full-fledged song.

I have divided these coaxing episodes into what I call *turns* and *gestures*, in an effort to capture in schematic form the subtle train of maneuvers leading into the onset of performance. Turns, in this system, are complete coaxing units; they are composed of smaller verbal, musical, or kinetic elements, which I call gestures, and may involve speech, humming, singing, strumming chords on the guitar, picking out melodies on individual or multiple guitar strings, or even simply reorienting the position of the body. I view turns, like the turns in conversations, as elements in a system of reciprocity. Dyadic coaxing is, among other things, a conversation, and as in conversational

practice, its turns are intended to elicit replies and responses (Goffman 1981). In coaxing, each turn originates with a gesture by one or both of the musicians, as they begin to coordinate their efforts. Simple turns consist of a single gesture by only one of the musicians; complex turns contain multiple gestures by one or both musicians. Turn boundaries are not always clear, but in most cases they are marked by a pause between successive gestures and the introduction of a new kind of gesture. The consistent trend is for the coaxed song to become ever more tangible with the accumulation of turns and gestures.

Episode 1: Moisés Vargas with Isaac Vargas Coaxing "Quiñones"

In this coaxing episode, as we shall see, the work is accomplished primarily through musical means—through half-strokes across the guitar strings, a partial articulation of the outlines of the melodies using muted guitar arpeggios, and some quiet, nonverbal humming. And as is often the case, coaxing is mixed with the tuning of the guitar strings. Moisés Vargas is an accomplished poet, composer, and musician; he is performing, on this occasion, with his eighteen-year-old nephew Isaac, who apprenticed to him to master the craft of traditional music. Naturally, Isaac tends to defer to his uncle, who takes the initiative in selecting and framing the performances. Still, the younger man plays an important role, as it is he who has the firmer grasp on many of the song lyrics. The interactional pattern is interesting here—the older man's higher status is tempered in part by the younger man's fluency in the tradition. But the assigned social hierarchy is not challenged; Moisés retains full authority over the playing out of coaxing, and Isaac is able to contribute only in the spaces allotted to him by his uncle. In the ensemble work, Moisés mostly provides instrumental ornamentation, and it is Isaac who sings lead, except when they perform one of the songs written by Moisés, who takes over the lead vocals for those numbers.

Here is a schematic of the action units, the turns and gestures, comprising this coaxing episode:

[Turn 1] In the aftermath of the previous song, Moisés, turned catty-corner to the audience, goes through his strings from highest to lowest, one by one, tuning each along the way.
[Turn 2] Moisés produces on the guitar a muted i-V-i cadence to establish the tonic key.[4]
[Turn 3] Moisés strums the two highest guitar strings while turning to Isaac and begins humming, wordlessly, the first phrase of the melody.
[Turn 4] Moisés runs through all his strings again, one by one, tuning one or two of them.
[Turn 5] Isaac, who has been silently holding his guitar, places it in playing position and very lightly strums chords as Moisés picks out the opening segment of the guitar entrance.
[Turn 6] Moisés pauses to tune a string while Isaac desists.
[Turn 7] On the guitar, Moisés plays arpeggios (strikes the notes of the chord individually one after the next, rather than strumming them all at once) in a i-V-i cadence, and then pieces together a complete scale in the tonic key.

[Turn 8] Moisés puts forward a strong i-V-i cadence.
[Turn 9] Moisés leans forward, faces the audience, nods his head, and says "*¡Ya!*" (Ready!), as Isaac closely regards him to catch the precise point of entry into performance.

This coaxing episode makes use of musical resources exclusively: there is humming, but it does not involve the articulation of words. Moisés takes the initiative throughout this episode, and he intermixes three gestures of tuning his guitar as he gradually evokes the chord sequence and melody of the corrido he is seeking. In Turns 1–4, framed by tuning gestures, Moisés is able to capture, tentatively, both the chord progression and melodic contours of the corrido "Quiñones." Beginning with Turn 5, Isaac, who had been sitting by idly, begins to get into the action, running chords beneath the melody that is materializing in his uncle's picking. With Turn 8, Moisés is confident enough to produce a strongly articulated cadence in the tonic minor, a sign that the coaxing process is coming to completion and the performance is close at hand.

Episode 2: Ernesto Gallardo and Alejandro Mejías Coaxing "Sidonio"

This coaxing episode is preceded by a prologue in the form of a request from an audience member, Raul Mayo, for a particular corrido and an exchange of comments back and forth between Ernesto and Raul, with another audience member, Guadalupe, making one contribution. In this regard, it is a good illustration of how elements in the pre-performance segment can mix and mingle with one another. Ernesto and Alejandro are semi-professional musicians who are accustomed to playing together at weddings and dances. Nonetheless, coaxing is a constant feature in their performances. When playing, Ernesto tends to take the lead, both in singing and guitar accompaniment, with Alejandro providing the second voice and the strumming of chords. This performance hierarchy is evident in the coaxing episode as well, where Alejandro lays low as Ernesto takes the initiative. Still, Alejandro does assert his presence and contributes to the coaxing.

Prologue

[R = Raul Mayo; E = Enrique Gallardo; G = Guadalupe]
R: *Oye, y ese corrido, ese corrido de Tamarindo, que apenas lo hicieron . . .*
[Listen, that corrido from Tamarindo that they just made . . .]
E: *Sí, ese es bueno.*
[Yes, that is a good one.]
R: *¿No saben ese corrido?*
[Don't you know that corrido?]
[Ernesto and Alejandro look at each other, as Alejandro shakes his head as if to say no.]
E: *No, pues ese corrido sí es bueno.*
no falta más, el mero mero?
[No, well that corrido is really a good one,
Why not give it a try, the real, real thing?]

[Ernesto gives a big smile.]
R: *Sí, y es reciente.*
[Yes, and it's brand new.]
G: *¡Héchenme uno!*
[Do one for me!]
E: *Bueno, ahora pues . . .*
[Okay, now then . . .]

Coaxing

[Turn 1] Ernesto and Alejandro place their guitars in the playing position.
[Turn 2] Ernesto strums the tonic chord.
[Turn 3] Ernesto and Alejandro produce, in unison on their guitars, a i-V-i cadence.
[Turn 4] Alejandro strums the basic harmonic framework, i-iv-i-V-i.
[Turn 5] Ernesto picks out a phrase in the melody with the top two guitar strings harmonized in thirds, over Alejandro's chords.
[Turn 6] Ernesto and Alejandro turn to face the audience, and Ernesto exclaims, "*¡Sale!*" [Here goes!].

The initial portion of this excerpt figures as prologue in that the interaction includes musicians and members of the audience. Once the musicians are persuaded to give it a try with the requested song, they enter into a coaxing mode, now turning away from the audience and directing their actions exclusively toward one another. As in the previous instance, this coaxing episode features musical gestures, and once again, the chord progression is worked out before the melodic phrase falls into place. Here, the first captured element is the tonal center, first found by Ernesto and then confirmed as he and Alejandro play the i-V-i cadence in unison. Next, Alejandro maps out the entire sequence of chords; then Ernesto is able to articulate the first melodic phrase over Alejandro's chord progression. As in all coaxing episodes, the transition to performance is clearly marked as the musicians shift their orientation toward the audience and Ernesto calls out "*¡Sale!*" (Here goes!).

Episode 3: Enrique Mares and Juvencio Vargas Coaxing "Moisés Colón"

This is an extended coaxing episode featuring a prolonged conversation, in words and in music, between two old friends who had not played together in some time but who command much the same repertoire of classic coastal corridos—in other words, a perfect setting for prolonged coaxing. In this episode, as in others that afternoon, Enrique takes the lead in suggesting songs, but it is Juvencio, the superior musician of the two, who controls the outcome. The key factors shaping this interaction are personality and the community's consensus about the participants' musical statures: Juvencio is forceful, Enrique is more retiring by nature, and Juvencio enjoys considerable fame on the coast as a performer of traditional songs. We note here, once again, the interplay of pre-performance frames, and even the possibility of overlap from one song performance to the next. Different from the previous two episodes, this one implicates a range of coaxing gestures, verbal as well as musical.

End of the epilogue to the previous corrido

[E = Enrique Mares; J = Juvencio Vargas; JM = John McDowell]
[During this exchange of comments ahead of the coaxing, the annunciation of the coming corrido is sounded by Juvencio as he strokes his fingers across the guitar strings; he seems to be deciding between a major and a minor tonality.]
JM: *Sí, en Cujai estuvimos.*
[Yes, we were in Cuaji.]
E: *Ah bueno, y yendo de aquí pa' allí, a la izquierda,*
y yendo de Pinotepa pa' acá, a la derecha.
[Oh, okay, and going from here to there, on the left,
and going from Pinotepa to here, on the right.]
JM: *A la derecha.*
[On the right.]

Coaxing

E: *Y el Quiñones, el otro, cuando lo mataron,* [Turn 1]
¿no te lo sabes?
[And the one about Quiñones, about when they killed him,
do you know it?]
J: ¿*Cuál es*? [Turn 2]
[Which one is that?]
E: *Cuando mataron a Quiñones.* [Turn 3]
[When they killed Quiñones.]
[In the next turn, Juvencio soft-sings the melody to the corrido he seeks even as he continues strumming its chord sequence.]
E: [soft-singing] [Turn 4]
Voy a cantar un corrido
señores, con atención,
voy a cantar un corrido
señores, con atención,
el treinta y uno de julio
mataron a Quiñones.
[I am going to sing a corrido
Gentlemen, take heed,
On the thirty-first of July
They brought Quiñones down.]
E: *¿No te lo sabes?* [Turn 5]
[Do you know it?]
J: *No*. [Turn 6]
E: *¿Lo cantamos?* [Turn 7]
[Shall we sing it?] (He refers to the corrido about the death of Quiñones.)
J: *No, yo no lo sé.* [Turn 8]
[No, I don't know it.]
E: *Digo, ¿lo cantamos?* [Turn 9]
[I say, shall we sing it?]
J: *Estoy tratando de acordarme de uno de Marcos Nava con . . .* [Turn 10]
[I am trying to remember one about Marco Nava with . . .]
E: *Ah, ese está bueno.* [Turn 11]
[Oh, that's a good one.]

J: . . . *con este Amado.* [Turn 12]
[. . . with this guy Amado.]
J: [soft-singing] [Turn 13]
Antelmo traiba su super
y Amado su parabelo
[These first two lines, above, are indistinct.]
conferenciaron con Sierra
y se pusieron de acuerdo,
hay que matar a Colón
para hacer enojar a Diego.
[Antelmo packed his super
and Amado his revolver
they got together with Sierra
and they came to an agreement,
it is necessary to kill Colón
in order to anger Diego.]
E: *Ah, ese me lo sé, me lo sé.* [Turn 14]
[Oh, I know that one, I know it.]
E: [soft-singing] [Turn 15]
Voy a cantar un corrido
pero con gran atención,
en el pueblo de Coyaca
se murió Moisés Colón,
lo mató Antelmo Castillo
y Amado Palma "el Pelón."
[I am going to sing a corrido
but with the utmost care,
in the village of Coyaca
Moisés Colón has died,
Antelmo Castillo killed him
and Amado Palma "el Pelón."]
E: *¿Ese?* [Turn 16]
[That one?]
J: [soft-singing] [Turn 17]
Antelmo traiba su super
y Amado su parabelo
conferenciaron con Sierra
y se pusieron de acuerdo,
hay que matar a Colón
para hacer enojar a Diego.
[Antelmo packed his super
and Amado his revolver
they got together with Sierra
and they came to an agreement,
it is necessary to kill Colón
in order to anger Diego.]
E: *¡Ese es, hombre!* [Turn 18]
[That's it, man!]

J: [soft-singing] [Turn 19]
Antelmo traiba su super
y Amado su parabelo
conferenciaron con Sierra
y se pusieron de acuerdo,
hay que matar a Colón
para hacer enojar a Diego.
[Antelmo packed his super
and Amado his revolver
they got together with Sierra
and they came to an agreement,
it is necessary to kill Colón
in order to anger Diego.]
E: *Por Sierra, Cucheto Sierra.* [Turn 20]
[Because of Sierra, Cucheto Sierra.]
[Enrique is referring to a line being soft-sung by Juvencio]
J: *Era un general.* [Turn 21]
[He was a general.]
[The previous comment comes right off the last line Juvencio has just soft-sung.]
J: [picks a few notes on the guitar] [Turn 22]
Diego era un general.
[Diego was a general.]
E: *¿Cómo? ¿Diego?* [Turn 23]
[What? Diego?]
J: *Diego era general.* [Turn 24]
[Diego was a general.]
E: *Diego, Diego Avila,* [Turn 25]
de allí, desde Coyaca,
rico ese, ese es . . .
[Diego, Diego Avila,
from there, from Coyaca,
a rich man, that one, that's him . . .]
J: *Sí, luego dice . . .* [Turn 26]
[Yes, then it goes . . .]
[strums and hums what appears to be a piece of the third stanza] [Turn 27]
E: *Vámonos, yo me lo sé ese corrido.* [Turn 28]
[Let's go, I know this corrido.]
J: *A ver, vamos a ver.* [Turn 29]
¡Vámonos!
[Let's see, let's see,
Let's go for it!]
[Juvencio begins the *performance* with guitar introduction.]
J: *Esos ponen muchos versos que no es y lo dañan.* [Turn 30]
[Those guys add a lot of stanzas that don't belong, and they ruin it.]
[This last remark is spoken as an aside to Enrique as the instrumental prelude is underway.]

This prelude to "Moisés Colón" is remarkable for the elaboration of the coaxing frame, which lasts some three minutes altogether. The frame is expanded due to competing suggestions from the two musicians, Enrique and Juvencio, each proposing with some enthusiasm a next selection for performance. Enrique attempts, without success, to bring forward a corrido about the death of Ernesto Quiñones, a well-known strongman of the coast (see Episode 1), but Juvencio resists and continues to plug the corrido he has announced and begun to coax. Enrique pushes his preference as far as he can in Turn 9—insisting to his companion, "*Digo, ¿lo cantamos?*" (I say, shall we sing it?)—but Juvencio denies knowing that corrido and persists in evoking his choice, "Moisés Colón," initially by playing guitar sketches from it and then by soft-singing its second stanza. Once Juvencio's choice comes into focus, Enrique gets into the spirit of it and, starting with Turn 14, enthusiastically joins the coaxing process.

This coaxing episode allows us to detect the gradual emergence of a sure grasp on the song, a progression that can be charted through a sequence of approximations from inception to completion. The first hint of this corrido, in Juvencio's guitar annunciation, overlaps with the last gasp of the previous song's epilogue. This first gesture is indecisive: Juvencio moves back and forth between major and minor chords on the guitar as he tries to hit on the right one. As the coaxing episode gets going (Turns 1–9), Juvencio settles on the minor and continues to piece together the chord sequence, all the while gaining a better handle on the musical setting of the song he seeks and fending off Enrique's zealous promotion of a different candidate for the next song. Finally, in Turn 10, Juvencio comes out of his musical reverie to verbalize his intentions; he still does not know the name of the corrido, but he is able to recall the name of one of its protagonists, Marcos Nava. That detail triggers his recall of another protagonist, Amado, and there is a cascading effect as the song attains, for the first time, a hesitant presence. In Turn 13, Juvencio hums the first two lines of the song's second stanza, a salient one due to its arresting content, and then manages to sing, in a hushed tone, the remaining four lines of that stanza. By now, Enrique has joined forces with Juvencio in tracking this corrido, and Enrique sings under his breath, in Turn 15, the words to the first stanza of "Moisés Colón." Juvencio continues to fix in mind the stanza he has been coaxing, now with both melody and lyrics coming into focus. With Turns 17 and 19, Juvencio secures an increasingly firmer grip on the stanza that initially opened a pathway for him to the song he seeks. This attainment convinces both Enrique and Juvencio to transition to the actual performance of the song, though an extended digression on a principal story character will prolong this episode for several more turns.

This last-minute digression into the attributes of a key story protagonist, Diego Avila, is interesting in its own right. In the course of several turns (20–25), Enrique and Juvencio offer each other descriptive details meant to identify this figure in terms of the role he will play in the corrido's plot and text. Juvencio asserts that he is a general, which surprises Enrique, who is able to supply the man's last name, his place of origin, and his stature as *un rico* (a rich man). Here, Enrique appears to have the better information, but his contribution is limited by Juvencio's assumption of leadership in the coaxing due to his recognized prowess as a musician. These exchanges, while digressive in character, are still part of the coaxing episode because they further stabilize the song's

features in the minds of the two musicians. Furthermore, although they contain the kinds of information we might encounter in a prologue, they are not addressed to the audience but rather surface in a channel of musician-to-musician communication.

As is often the case, this coaxing material sheds light on the singers' understanding of the narrated event. Locating Diego Avila in the web of regional history becomes an exercise in striving for resonant points of reference. The plot of this corrido centers on Moisés Colón, a local strongman; in searching for its most accessible features, Juvencio recalls a key player in this historical matrix, Diego Avila, whom Juvencio remembers to be a high-ranking military officer but Enrique recalls as part of a provincial elite. We learn from other commentary, in the epilogue associated with this performance, that Colón had married Avila's daughter, thus cementing an alliance with an influential family in the area. The point here, for our purposes, is that this pattern of alliances between local strongmen and well-connected provincial elites is a recurring theme in the struggles along the coast that have provided such fine material for its *corridistas* (Flanet 1977; Manzano 1991; McDowell 2000). Plausibly, it is the prominence of this theme—the larger implications of local quarrels—that netted the attention of Juvencio and Enrique as they sought to coax "Moisés Colón" into existence.

It is worth pausing on Juvencio's final thrust, spoken even as the actual performance is commencing yet logically parsed as a component of the coaxing episode, as it is addressed to Enrique: his assertion that other musicians "ruin" this song by putting "a lot of the wrong lines" in it. Juvencio presents himself as the true bearer of Costa Chica song and disparages the way some younger musicians "tamper" with the tradition, even if many of them have learned the repertoire from him. This comment about ruining songs can be seen as bringing closure to the extended search, executed in both verbal and musical gestures, that has resulted in launching the performance of "Moisés Colón."

And here, let me toss in a caveat. I have characterized coaxing as decidedly not performance, but it is evident that Juvencio carried out these coaxing gestures with his signature flair for the dramatic. It is arguable that Juvencio was, to some degree, playing to the audience in this coaxing sequence, even though the search for the song was clearly the primary business at hand. In episodes like this one, we approach what Hymes (1981) termed a "breakthrough into performance." As has been oft-noticed, artistic performance is a habit of our species, and much of what we do betrays the influence of stylistic considerations (Jakobson 1960; Mukarovsky 1964). Even coaxing is not systematically excluded from the tendency to invest behavior with artistic touches. However, on balance, the Costa Chica evidence points decisively to the pragmatic character of coaxing. What we see, in most cases, is not a breakthrough into performance during the coaxing episode but a stepping into performance when the episode is completed.

Conclusion

The core of my argument is that coaxing is an integral component of the performance sequence in many settings and that we would do well to attend closely to it, even if the prevailing local custom is to pretend that it is not there, that it is not happening. Drawing on corrido performances on Mexico's Costa Chica, I have attempted to illustrate

how coaxing episodes assist performers in accomplishing their mission, deliver unprompted insights into the way the artists conceptualize the tradition, and actualize social hierarchies implicit in ensemble performance. Close inspection of the corrido performances that I have observed and documented indicates the ineffable presence of an anticipatory frame of muted performance, not equally prominent in all performance settings yet routine in those kinds of performance that have the flavor more of a jam session than a polished stage show. I maintain that coaxing has something important to tell us about the way musicians perceive and organize their song repertories, all the more valuable because we catch them in the act of handling these repertoires on their own time, not formulating responses to our queries about them.

Let us take stock of what we have learned about coaxing strategies in these segments of subordinate communication featuring collusive preplay. Coaxing episodes normally occur immediately prior to the launching of the performance, though they may overlap in part with the epilogues of previous songs and with other components of the pre-performance frame. They are composed of a series of gestures that can be grouped into turns, and there is typically a progression from initially vague to successively more fixed manifestations of song attributes. In dyadic settings, the two musicians are likely to play off one another, at times with competing song candidates, at times in a joint pursuit of the same song. If the onset of coaxing may be as indistinct as a chord sounded on the guitar or mention of a person or place, its terminus is sharply delineated by a forceful assertion of readiness to perform.

These data indicate that dyadic coaxing, in particular, is a site of interactive drama, where issues of hierarchy and solidarity are played out directly and sometimes forcefully among the musicians. In each of the three episodes, personal and social factors condition the patterns of cooperation and competition between the musicians. The first episode features the uncle, elder, and distinguished composer and performer Moisés taking the lead in coaxing, while his nephew Isaac defers to him. In the second episode, Ernesto presents himself as the leader, but his companion, Alejandro, seeks to assert himself as a significant presence. In the third, Juvencio's brash personality (and his superior musical talent) generally trump Enrique's firmer grounding in regional history, though Enrique makes a valiant effort to exert some control over the coaxing. These observations offer only an inkling of the layers of intrigue present in coaxing episodes, sites of vigorous negotiation laying the foundation for the tight collaborations of song performances.

The coaxing data reveal a wide range of resources activated to accomplish the landing of the next song. Musical resources include both instrumental and vocal gestures; chord progressions, cadences, and melodic contours may be produced on musical instruments, and melodic phrases may be hummed or sung at a reduced volume, with varying degrees of verbal articulation present. Coaxers may also produce lines, couplets, and complete stanzas from the desired song, and the verbal channel of speech may be activated to name persons, places, events, and other relevant elements. Beyond the musical and verbal channels, body posture and orientation are prominently involved, as are, presumably, tactile and habitual-motion factors associated with the use of musical instruments. All of these features may co-occur in coaxing turns, or they may appear discretely in isolation from one another.

Those coaxing turns that involve talk gestures illustrate how the musicians situate their songs in wider contexts of personal association and collective memory. We have seen that coaxing may become digressive in some instances and acquire a life of its own, as when Enrique and Juvencio attempt to pin down the identity of a secondary protagonist in the sought-after corrido, "Moisés Colón." The entire assembly of para-performance components—the prologues and epilogues—offers rich data to the ethnographer, since most of this commentary originates within the local context and is directed to participants in that context. These elements convey exegesis of, by, and for the participants in the tradition. But I want to close by arguing that within this rich harvest of information, the collusive preplay of coaxing presents special, even unique, insights.

Coaxing, with its intertextual and reflexive properties, showcases musicians actively seeking access to their songs, in part through *referential* discourse (by talking about them) but in large part through *ostensive* discourse (McDowell 1982; Dégh and Vázsonyi 1983)—that is, by actualizing them, albeit in a tentative manner. The referential discourse frequently points to details of person, place, and history, and in this way it enables us to see how the performers situate themselves in relation to the protagonists of the songs and the events narrated in the songs. Taken cumulatively, this discourse surrounding corrido performance is indispensable for understanding the histories that are commemorated and dramatized there.

The ostensive elements, occurring exclusively in coaxing episodes, provide an intriguing complement to these verbalizations. When musicians hum core segments of a melody, pluck out a tune fragment, or realize a cadence in its tonic key, they are identifying for us, and for themselves, the acoustic, kinetic, and tactile "handles" that this material presents to them. These intertextual anticipations encode a kind of song essence, a condensed token of the full package as subsequently realized in performance. In this preliminary formulation of the coaxing frame, I have only hinted at the potential rewards of unpacking these episodes, but I believe that the coaxing of corridos by Costa Chica musicians, with its referential and ostensive elements, affords the scholar an illuminating perspective on the ways these singers and musicians conceptualize and enact their traditions. I suspect that other performance traditions exhibit comparable preparatory segments and that, upon close inspection, these too will yield valuable analytical insights.

Notes

The seed for this article was a presentation that I did at the 1993 annual meeting of the American Folklore Society in Eugene, Oregon, as part of a project on Spanish American Folk Poetry in Performance, chaired by Richard Bauman. I would like to acknowledge the participants in that project, as well as students at Indiana University who throughout the years have helped me think about the matters addressed here. Also, I thank Timothy Cooley, Ruth Hellier-Tinoco, the anonymous reviewers for the *Journal of American Folklore*, and its two editors, for many useful suggestions. Naturally, the final product is mine alone, and I assume sole responsibility for any and all defects.

1. We attend to song in this article, but it is easy to imagine that performing virtually any expressive form—for example, telling a joke or a story, or doing a dance—could occasion a process of coaxing.

2. These and all translations in this article are of my own making.

3. My participation in the EVIADA (Ethnographic Video for Instruction and Analysis Digital Archive) Project, housed at Indiana University and the University of Michigan, has been helpful in isolating coaxing episodes. The software program developed for this project, the Annotator's Workbench, facilitates separating chunks in the performance sequence for close analysis and commentary. The video footage I used with EVIADA was shot by my wife, Patricia Glushko, during visits to the Costa Chica in 1989, 1990, and 1996.

4. In Western music theory, chords are commonly labeled using roman numerals; the number indicates the note of the scale from which the chord was built, with the tonal center represented being "one." Capital letters are used to indicate major chords, and lower case letters indicate minor chords. Here, a series of chords is transcribed using dashes to separate the chords of the progression.

References Cited

Abrahams, Roger. 2005. *Everyday Life: A Poetics of Vernacular Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Bateson, Gregory. 1972. A Theory of Play and Fantasy. In *Steps to an Ecology of the Mind*, pp. 177–93. New York: Ballantine Books.

Bauman, Richard. 1977. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Rowly, MA: Newbury House.

———. 2004. *A World of Others' Words: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Bauman, Richard, and Charles Briggs. 1990. Poetics and Performance as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19:59–88.

Bauman, Richard, and Pamela Ritch. 1994. Informing Performance: Producing the *Coloquio* in Tierra Blanca. *Oral Tradition* 9(2):255–80.

Bealle, John. 1993. Self-involvement in Musical Performance: Stage Talk and Interpretive Control at a Bluegrass Festival. *Ethnomusicology* 37(1):63–76.

Berger, Harris M. 1999. *Metal, Rock, and Jazz: Perception and the Phenomenology of Musical Experience*. Music/Culture Series. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Berger, Harris M., and Giovanna P. Del Negro. 2002. Bauman's Verbal Art and the Social Organization of Attention: The Role of Reflexivity in the Aesthetics of Performance. *Journal of American Folklore* 115(455):62–91.

———. 2004. The Role of Reflexivity in the Aesthetics of Performance: Verbal Art, Popular Display, and Popular Music. In *Identity and Everyday Life: Essays in the Study of Folklore, Music, and Popular Culture*, pp. 89–123. Music/Culture Series. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.

Briggs, Charles. 1986. *Learning How to Ask: A Sociolinguistic Appraisal of the Role of the Interview in Social Science Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Briggs, Charles, and Richard Bauman. 1992. Genre, Intertextuality, and Social Power. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 2(2):131–72.

Dégh, Linda, and Andrew Vázsonyi. 1983. Does the Word "Dog" Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend Telling. *Journal of Folklore Research* 20(1):5–34.

Flanet, Véronique. 1977. *Viviré, si Dios quiere: un estudio de la violencia en la mixteca de la costa*. Mexico: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

Geertz, Clifford. 1972. Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight. *Daedulus* 101(1):1–37.

———. 1973. Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture. In *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, pp. 3–30. New York: Basic Books.

Goffman, Erving. 1981. *Forms of Talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Gumperz, John. 1982. *Discourse Strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Heisley, Michael. 1993. Truth in Folksong: A Corridista's View of Singing in the California Farm Workers Movement. In *Songs of Work: Essays in Occupational Culture*, ed. Archie Green, pp. 221–52. Special Publication Series no. 3. Bloomington: Folklore Institute, Indiana University.

Hernández, Guillermo. 1992. El corrido ayer y hoy: nuevas notas para su estudio. In *Entre la Magia y la*

Historia: tradiciones, mitos y leyendas de la frontera, comp. José Manuel Valenzuela Arce, pp. 319–37. Tijuana: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte.
Herrera-Sobek, María. 1990. *The Mexican Corrido: A Feminist Analysis*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Hymes, Dell. 1981. *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You": Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Jakobson, Roman. 1960. Concluding Statement: Linguistics and Poetics. In *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas Sebeok, pp. 350–77. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Lord, Albert. 1960. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Manzano, María de los Ángeles. 1991. *Cuajinicuilapa, Guerrero: Historia oral (1900–1940)*. México: Ediciones Artesa.
McDowell, John. 1972. The Mexican Corrido: Formula and Theme in a Ballad Tradition. *Journal of American Folklore* 85(337):205–20.
———. 1982. Beyond Iconicity: Ostension in Kamsá Mythic Narrative. *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 19(2–3):119–39.
———. 1992. Folklore as Commemorative Discourse. *Journal of American Folklore* 105(418):403–23.
———. 2000. *Poetry and Violence: The Ballad Tradition of Mexico's Costa Chica*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
———. 2005. Chante Luna and the Commemoration of Actual Events. *Western Folklore* 64(1–2):39–64.
———. 2007. Corridos of 9/11: Mexican Ballads as Commemorative Practice. In *Music in the Post-9/11 World*, ed. J. Martin Daughtry and Jonathan Ritter, pp. 225–54. New York: Routledge.
Mendoza, Vicente T. 1954. *El corrido mexicano: antología, introducción y notas*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económico.
Monson, Ingrid. 1996. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Mukarovsky, Jan. 1964. The Esthetics of Language. In *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style*, ed. Paul Garvin, pp. 31–69. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
Nicolopolous, James. 1997. The Heroic Corrido: A Premature Obituary? *Aztlán: International Journal of Chicano Studies Research* 22(1):115–38.
Paredes, Américo. 1958. *"With His Pistol in His Hand": A Border Ballad and Its Hero*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
———. 1963. The Ancestry of Mexico's Corridos: A Matter of Definitions. *Journal of American Folklore* 76(301): 231–35.
———. 1973. José Mosqueda and the Folklorization of Actual Events. *Aztlán: International Journal of Chicano Studies Research* 4(1):1–30.
———. 1977. On Ethnographic Work among Minority Groups: A Folklorist's Perspective. *New Scholar* 7(1):1–32.
———. 1993. *Folklore and Culture on the Texas-Mexican Border*, ed. Richard Bauman. CMAS Books. Austin: University of Texas Press.
Schechner, Richard. 1985. *Between Theater and Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
Schutz, Alfred. 1964. Making Music Together. In *Collected Papers, Vol. 2.: Studies in Social Theory*, ed. A. Broderson, pp. 159–78. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.
Stone, Ruth M. 1982. *Let the Inside Be Sweet: The Interpretation of Music Event among the Kpelle of Liberia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Tannen, Deborah. 1989. *Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Wald, Elijah. 2001. *Narcocorrido: A Journey into the Music of Drugs, Guns, and Guerrillas*. New York: HarperCollins.